

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS 14991

E.O.11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PFOR FR PK US
SUBJ: FRENCH VIEWS OF PAKISTAN SITUATION

1. DURING THE COURSE OF AN INFORMAL DISCUSSION OF OTHER MATTERS, MOREAU, QUAI DEPUTY DIRECTOR FOR ASIA (SOUTH ASIA) GAVE HIS VIEWS OF THE SITUATION IN PAKISTAN. MOREAU SAID THAT HE HAD STOPPED WRITING BRIEFING PAPERS ABOUT PAKISTAN. THE SAME BASIC ELEMENTS REMAINED, BHUTTO WISHED TO HOLD ON, THE OPPOSITION WOULD SETTLE FOR NOTHING LESS THAN HIS DEPARTURE, AND THE ARMY WAS RELUCTANT TO PLAY A POLITICAL ROLE. OTHERWISE, HE THOUGHT IT IMPOSSIBLE TO PREDICT WHETHER A REFERENDUM WOULD TAKE PLACE, WHETHER BHUTTO WOULD BE ABLE TO MAKE AN AUTHORITARIAN GESTURE (WITH ARMY SUPPORT) WHICH WOULD SILENCE THE OPPOSITION, OR WHETHER BHUTTO WOULD BE FORCED TO LEAVE. HE THOUGHT IT CLEAR THAT THE ONLY ALTERNATIVE TO BHUTTO WAS THE ARMY EVEN IF IT CHOSE TO PUT A NOMINAL CIVILIAN FROM AMONG THE OPPOSITION ELEMENTS IN AS A FRONT MAN. MOREAU ALSO THOUGHT THAT REGARDLESS OF THE OUTCOME, PAKISTAN HAD SUFFERED FROM THE LONG TURMOIL; WHOEVER WON WOULD WIN LESS. CERTAINLY BHUTTO'S OVERALL POSITION WILL BE REDUCED EVEN IF HE PREVAILS.

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2. MOREAU SAID THAT THE FRENCH CONSIDERED THERE WAS CLEAR EVIDENCE THAT SOME OF THE OPPOSITION ELEMENTS HAD OUTSIDE FINANCING. BHUTTO'S CLAIM THAT BECAUSE DOLLARS WERE FOUND IT WAS THE US WHICH WAS RESPONSIBLE WAS TOO SIMPLISTIC. THE FACT BHUTTO HAD BEEN ABLE TO FURNISH NO DETAILS OF THE ALLEGED US INVOLVEMENT SHOWED

HOW WEAK HIS CASE WAS AGAINST THE US. ON THE OTHER HAND, IT WAS QUITE POSSIBLE THAT LIBYA, SAUDI ARABIA, AND PERHAPS EVEN IRAN HAD BEEN FINANCING SOME OPPOSITION ELEMENTS. EVEN MORE DIFFICULT TO GUESS THAN THE SOURCE OF THE FINANCING WAS THE REASONING BEHIND IT. MOREAU COULD NOT UNDERSTAND WHAT ONE OF THE ABOVE COUNTRIES MIGHT HOPE TO GAIN FROM THIS MEDDLING, EXCEPT PERHAPS BY WEAKENING BHUTTO INTERNALLY TO DIMINISH HIS ARROGANCE ON THE INTERNATIONAL SCENE. (HE DID NOT EXCLUDE FUNDAMENTALIST ISLAMIC MOTIVES ON THE PART OF LIBYA.) IN ANY CASE IT WAS POLITICALLY MORE EXPEDIENT AND EVEN USEFUL FOR BHUTTO TO SINGLE OUT THE US FOR HIS ALLEGATIONS THAN FELLOW MUSLIM COUNTRIES SUCH AS SAUDI ARABIA, LIBYA OR IRAN.
GAMMON

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